MOSAICS OF TRUTH

IN NATURE

ETTA·MERRICK·GRAVES

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THE SHADOWS OF THE TREES

From the original in colors by Annie Benson Müller

MOSAICS *of* TRUTH
IN NATURE

BY

ETTA MERRICK GRAVES

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TO

MY BELOVED MOTHER

WHOSE LIFE WAS AND IS
A CONSTANT INSPIRATION
AND BENEDICTION TO ALL
WHOM IT TOUCHED, THESE
GLIMPSES OF TRUTH ARE
LOVINGLY INSCRIBED BY
HER "WHITE ROSE"

FOREWORD

There are moments in the life of each of us in which come glimpses of Truth in bits of radiance, which when put together as a whole, form Mosaics of Truth in our lives. We cannot claim such glimpses as coming from ourselves on the purely natural plane of intellectual perception. The glimpses which come from "spiritual mountain tops," as it were, are of a deeper, more hidden inner life than reason can rightly call its own making. The spirit within us has communed with Truth from the unseen Source of Truth, and through the clouds of earthly vision we catch the light of heaven.

If, in such moments of clear, inner seeing of the spirit, one sits down quietly, and, without endeavoring to frame words, will let the words "come of themselves" through the hand upon the written page, it is as though the soul imprinted itself on the white paper. The act of writing is guided by the mind, but is led by the spirit to express the spirit's clear vision of Truth as it sees it from the heights. The act seems such a solemn moment of communion, that one hesitates to turn back to

read the written words, lest the cold paper come between the act and the glowing vision which guided the hand; lest, also, the mind claim the Mosaics of Truth as its own creation, and pride creep in to drive away the glimpses in the future.

Have you never read beautiful lines and exclaimed, "That is just what I have thought, but could not express it as beautifully"?

The vision was yours, but you had not trained your mind and hand to let your soul impress itself on the paper. That was the only difference. Poor mortals that we are to let the materialism of the world step in and limit our ability to portray our gleams of Truth to others.

"Quench not the spirit" should be our motto. "What God has cleansed, call not thou common." Take your own visions of Truth, small and imperfect though they be, and despise them not by calling them "your own" and not worthy of expression. That which God gives as thy message to the world, that use thou, for He has "cleansed it" and it is no longer "common," for it is not thine own, but from Him.

These Mosaics "came" to me at intervals and I transcribed them, at first, to help a friend. As a girl leaving the teens, life was full of problems to solve and, as if in answer,

these truths came to me. Whenever possible, I would go off alone into the heart of nature to "impress my soul on paper." If I did not at once obey the inner prompting to write, the vision faded. It could not be intellectually "recalled" as a "thought" could have been in connection with other lines of writing.

This lesson was impressed upon me, I remember, at the first in this way:

The outline of a truth always came as a whole, for detail of expression grew only during the writing. One day I held it a while in consciousness, then put it aside till I "had more time"! Later, alas, I discovered that it had entirely gone from me and never returned! There only remained a feeling of having "lost" something. A cloud, as it were, hid it from my inner sight. It was not mine, for it had been offered to me and I had rejected it!

This may seem strange to some who read this, but to many it will show the workings of the spirit within each of us, whatever may be the name we give it.

I send these Mosaics of Truth forth in the form in which they first came to me, though not in the order of time — which has been a period of some ten years of searching for Truth. The name stands as given to notebooks at first, when no idea of a book-form entered into it.

FOREWORD

Whatever the reader may gain of help, or whatever parts may appeal as Truth, that accept in the reverend spirit with which the book is offered. And may he learn that, by being himself receptive to the "inner voice," he will be led to the heights of the spirit whence Truth shines for all who have spiritual "eyes to see."

Etta Merrick Graves.

Milton, Massachusetts.

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MOSAICS OF TRUTH IN NATURE

LIFE'S MOSAICS

As we go through life we are ever gathering tiny stones of color and real value to set in the finished Mosaic of life's great design.

Our inner eye sees this tiny jewel — which to the man's bodily eye seems but shining glass; but seeing that it will be of value in the central setting, the Soul within us carefully gathers it.

Thus the man takes and uses some tiny particles which he may recognize at once as valuable. Others may be given him which he fain would cast by the wayside as burdensome; yet he keeps them — he knows not why. Only God knows the real value or worthlessness of each. Yet He allows man to choose for himself while offering him only those of great value.

Thus the tiny life gems are gathered:—some are of delicate coloring or mingled perhaps with the tints of others with which it has come in contact in opalescent splendor. Others, pure, clear, and sparkling, shine forth brilliantly, radiating the clear light of the sun, undimmed by earth's shadows.

Others may have a deep, fiery glow — tell-

ing of unusually violent struggles, but shining by the glorious light of victory won!

Still others may glow softly with the golden light of sunny days, or show dark days of storm or cloud.

Some are tiny, but of rare value. Others larger and more showy, but of less transparent glory of color. Some are regular in shape — wrought carefully by patient labor from resisting circumstance. Others which promised to give a beautiful jewel are left ragged and unfinished. For some reason, we were not allowed to finish; or perhaps we were too eager to begin on another!

Thus God who sees the finished design, guides the man, who truly seeks, in choosing of the right stones. Then the time comes when the man sees the forming of all these units to make a complete whole.

In man's own conception he may have seen a design for which he thought his gems of the past and present were to be used. A beautiful design it might have been, had he been able to complete it as he thought.

But God has not disturbed the man's conception of it till the right time has come for deciding where and what the central stone, and consequent color scheme, shall be.

It may come at a time when a sudden light of truth reveals the far off scene in its com-

pletion. And, ah! the supreme happiness of that vision — which may fade in the gathering clouds of difficulties.

Or it may come when the man sees the failure of the work he has undertaken, and, losing courage, sinks down, aimless, ready to cease striving. The clouds are so thick that he sees no light in the direction in which he seeks it. What shall he do!

The man's Soul still sees the light; but how shall it comfort the downhearted man, if the light lies in another direction from that in which he is looking.

A friend who catches a glimpse of that light says, "Turn this way!" He turns, but shakes his head. He cannot take the guidance of that light. He must still wait for the dawning of the gleam for which he longs.

So he waits, and tries to gather up the gems; but they will not form the design which he saw in the glory of his own conception. Why did he not shape this one differently? Why did he keep this color — it seems to be out of harmony with the rest! "Why keep them at all?"— he finally asks in his desperation. "They can never amount to anything separately, and I can never put them together! The world is already filled with good designs of the very material with which I am hopelessly struggling!"

Slowly the new light of truth enters the darkened field of vision. Softly, still dim, that the weary eyes be not blinded. Slowly the man begins to see a new design — the true design — for which he unconsciously was gathering his jewels.

Now the units form themselves before him in a perfect whole, no longer failing to fit into their right place or to break the harmony. "He sees the whole design!" The Lord has won the man's whole purpose, for man has accepted the light that leads along a new path.

Yet he hesitates still. He thinks of the path he has followed so long and looks back with longing. He thinks of the friends he met who were choosing like gems for a common purpose. He must tell them of the new light that calls him away from them, and dreads to make the separation.

The light, however, is urgent. It must claim the follower's unity of purpose, and may demand the sacrifice for the sake of the greater glory it promises.

The last step, however, is taken in the old path. The next step turns aside into the new way, and on every side lie new gems to be added to the store already gathered, for the old is invaluable in the new design.

Thus we gather our Mosaics of life on the path in which our own vision of truth leads us.

Follow the light you now have, faithfully, unswervingly, while it shines. It may often be darkened; but grope along the path while you have strength. If that is still to be your light it will shine out again; but if, however, the way remains dark beyond your strength, open your eyes to be receptive in receiving a new vision of the light of truth which is surely shining near you, and calling you to gather new Mosaics for your life's grand design.

THE STAR OF PROMISE

For several days the storm's path has hid the light of the sun. In vain have we looked for a lessening of the gloom, as the skies have poured forth their gathered store from reservoirs of clouds.

The dial shows that the period belonging to daylight has ended, so the darkness deepens, and with it the rain ceases.

Who shall say where the firmament lies? It seems to have shut itself within a canopy of darkness, made more evident by the glaring, artificial lights of a busy city.

"No stars tonight!" None? You are looking too low on the horizon. Look straight above you! There, shining bright and clear, is a single star! A star of promise! What need of more to assure the weary watcher that there is an infinite number of stars shining above the clouds, merely waiting to shine through?

One star has found a tiny place through which to send down a welcome light. The storm is lifting! And the faint light of the star gives promise of the sun's radiance for the morrow.

"One star cannot illumine the heavens," you

say? "Wait until there is no cloud before we may be sure that the storm will not linger longer. And why should we predict the sun in a day that has not dawned, by reason of one tiny star?"

Oh, friend! Why not accept the promise God gives in the slightest ray of light sent in the darkness! Would we prize that one star as highly if it shone in company with a host of others in a larger opening through the clouds?

God never promises that which He cannot fulfill. And with even the one star He can scatter the hosts of barrier clouds, and fill a cloudless sky with an infinite number of lights. Then with the dawn of Day He will not hide from us the glory of His Sun.

How often in trouble, sorrow, perplexity, doubt or poverty, we fasten our eyes on the existing conditions of darkness below, and complain that the "stars do not shine"! Have you looked directly above you, to see whether you could find even one star shining through your gloom? In it there is a promise for you. If you neglect to recognize its message of coming light, you are still more desolate, while the darkness seems more despairing. Fix your eyes on that tiny gleam, and as you look steadily, you will catch the light of other stars shining through the widening space in your clouds of discontent.

Do not wait till you see no cloud whatever in your evening sky before you begin to hope. Above you may be the steady light of the guiding North Star by which alone you may steer your course. What matter if you catch sight of a multitude of changing lights, if the star you need holds back its light above the clouds?

Then look for the Star of Promise. Look for it night after night in time of storm. It may appear when you have given up the search, and then how can its rays reach eyes that are blind? Not even the sun itself could bring light to such an one!

But to each of us is sent, in some part of the heavens, a Star of Promise. Have you found yours?

THE FLOWERS' GIVING

The flowers' life consists in giving, and the fullness of their life is in proportion to the abundance of their giving.

Each flower opens its bud to share with the world the life shut up within it. It gives abroad to the air the fragrance with which it is endowed. It radiates the sunshine it has stored — through the beauty of its coloring. All this it gives of its own free will. It gives because of its very nature. The moment it ceases to give, it withers and dies!

The flowers give. But is their generosity lost? Giving never fails to bring a rich harvest to the true giver.

Deep in its heart the little flower has stored its richest treasure. The gift of fragrance and of beauty it sends forth to the superficial observer. These may be had without the seeking, but the gift in its heart may be found only by those who know how to enter the storehouse — past the pollen gates.

All day long the flower houses are being visited by multitudes of tiny visitors — each seeking the hidden treasures in the honey chambers.

No one who asks aright is ever refused a tiny portion. Yet, as each leaves, he is asked to carry to the next door neighbor a golden grain of pollen, to exchange greetings of friendship. As he enters the neighbor's pollen gates he leaves the friend's token with the pistil who guards the entrance of the house within.

As each gift is received it is sent in to the inmates, who never see the light, and who, but for these tokens, would soon pine away and die. As these gifts pour in, they enlarge their little green house to receive them, till, unable to hold the ripening seeds of friendship, they open their doors — now turned brown in the sunshine's rays of love — and scatter the blessings they have received.

Are we, like the flowers, living through giving? Each one has been given some external gift to share with the superficial passerby. Gifts are they which we cannot hide as long as we possess and care for them; but within each heart God has given a treasure-house filled with blessings to be shared with those who wish to enter.

Do we refuse admittance? The friendly visitor has a message for you that he has carried from another friend near by. As he enters he leaves the message with the gate-keeper of your character. He seeks to enjoy the sweetness which is stored within your heart.

It was never given you to keep to yourself. It was given you to share, and thus to attract the friendly visitors who bring messages from without you.

Of themselves the treasures that you possess can avail you nothing, save as you *share* them. If you refuse admittance to them, visitors will soon cease to come, and your character will shrivel up. You will never be able to ripen the indwelling possibilities, and become of value to the world.

Each flower may choose with whom it may share its honeyed treasures. It dresses itself in the garb which best attracts the visiting friends. It shapes its mansion and places its treasures in order to enable those to enter, who, in like manner, have best adapted themselves to seek and possess the friend's offering.

Some flowers dress in modest white, but add a fragrance of wonderful sweetness. Others choose brilliant colors and with spicy, pungent, or little fragrance rely upon their showy dress to attract the attention of the visitors they wish.

Some offer their treasures in dainty, shallow cups — easy of access to larger numbers of visitors. Others sink them in deep vase forms, where only a chosen few, with long, slender arms may grasp the hidden sweetness.

Thus each of us may choose with whom we

may share our heart's best treasures. Some may seek to enter who have no means of finding the hiding place, even after they have successfully passed the outer gates. Others with no friendly greeting may not be allowed even to pass the doorkeeper, and so must go on their way to seek elsewhere.

Those who do enter may feast on the treasure sweets, according to the abundance that the host has stored, then go their way refreshed, while the owner has been enriched an hundredfold by the friendly exchange of gifts.

Character is ripened only by the flower's way of giving — thus receiving in greater fullness. Seeds of kindness can swell into maturity in the sunshine of love, by giving of the best that the house affords to those who seek.

Thus, when the Harvest Time shall come, each shall be asked to reveal the stores that he has gained, through *giving*. And according to the faithfulness of each shall come the reward of our " floral giving."

EACH IN ITS SEASON

Every tree, shrub and flower blooms in its appointed season, and every season is filled with the life of its time. Even to cold winter, who hides its seed treasures deep below the white snow coverlets. Perhaps it fears it may destroy the glory Fall entrusted to its care to deliver safely into the waiting hands of Spring.

With the first parting of the coverlets Spring tenderly takes the snowdrops — "Winter's timid child"— into its lap. What a beautiful floral token it is of coming life — perfect in its purity and dress of spotless white! How could Nature more fitly usher in the life of the flower family?

Then comes the silver gray of the pussy willow:

> "Smoothing with its fair wands
> Nature's ragged edges."

As Mother Earth prepares a way for each member of the flower family according to the needs of each, there comes the dainty violet:

> "Fair as a star when only one
> Is shining in the sky."

And, as Spring scatters her sunshine and refreshing showers with lavish hand, the earth is covered with gold and silver, as the buttercup and daisy play together over field and hillside " to tell of happy hours."

Then with the lengthening days, Nature's time is devoted to fashioning the fairest of the flowers — the rose, " queen of every grove."

Nature, while filling the earth with floral beauty plans ever for the life of all, even to the smallest insect. Thus each flower, while drawing its nourishment from Mother Earth, must in return, spread a table for the air family, where

" the blythe bee sips
From the purple, delicate cups of wine
That he finds on the morning-glory vine."

While giving man these glories to enjoy in field and woodland, by sheltered nook or " upland pasture," Nature knows that many, who fain would seek them there, must stay in the haunts of men to gain their livelihood. So she sends the blue-eyed succory

" by the dusty road
Where tired feet toil to and fro."

And that with its ever upward glance it may teach sin-laden and sorrow-worn passers-by to

" look toward a more tender blue."

The days shorten, but Nature has worked well. Although the glory of Spring and Summer has faded, she has been bearing the fruits of a well-spent past. Her arms are overflowing with the harvest stores which "Autumn, benefactor kind," has "poured from out his lavish store."

Jack Frost is coming now to claim the land, and intends destruction. He must still, however, view the effects of his evil deeds turned into Autumn's glory. For

"October is an artist rare,
He touches first the maple leaf
Which biting frosts have brought to grief."

While over the brown earth shines forth the goldenrod —"dear shadowed sunshine," and her faithful follower, the purple aster. For

"Perhaps she knows her dainty dress
Is just the color that your blossom needs."

Thus the glory of the flower world passes away. The abundance of the fruit world is stored for man's use, and seeds of all kinds are scattered for future flowers. So, to cover the desolate earth,

"silent and soft and slow descends the snow."

Yet still, deep and warm

"Beneath the winter's snow,
Lie germs of summer's flowers."

We, too, have our seasons, and we must take life's good gifts, each in its season.

Slowly life's Spring-time advances, bringing one and another promise of flowers. We feel the life stirring within us, and long to hasten the opening of the buds. Still, if we lose the patience necessary to develop the flower in its season, we will destroy the glory we might otherwise enjoy, and the fruits it might have yielded.

Nor should we long for the summer flowers when we might be enjoying the less brilliant and showy flowers of growing Spring.

Or, if by too ardent longing for the fruits of Autumn, we devote too little time and care to the flowers as they come in their seasons, we lose both. And thus we enter on the Winter with no stores, and with but slight hope of Spring flowers for which we have scattered no seeds.

Life is filled with opportunities which come, each in its season. If we take and cultivate even the most insignificant, those coming later will not lack the conditions necessary for their flowering and fruitage.

So let us not complain of the season in which we are now growing, nor envy others the glory of their Summer-time.

Each of us is a flower growing forever in God's eternal seasons. Each one He has

planted in the earth in the place and time best fitted for us to grow and flower to complete His Floral Design. If we do not blossom, or if we fail to " bear much fruit," we are depriving His heavenly land of part of the glory we might have added if we had fulfilled our mission — each in his Season.

THE WEB OF FRIENDSHIP

Where shall the web of friendship be spun?

The little spider's life is begun in a certain location, in Nature's world. Shall she spin her own little web near that of the "home web," or shall she by choice or external circumstances start it elsewhere?

Wherever the web of friendship may be spun, its character depends on the little spider friend herself. It depends on her to what she shall fasten the slender threads radiating from herself, and from a common home center — where she dwells.

This little spider lives in the fresh woods in the very heart of Nature's world. Her first delicate threads have been attached to that which was nearest. And the delicate finger tips of tall mother pine hold many of the foundation threads of the little life reaching out into the wide world.

Then, still seeking for support, the little spider finds growing about the loving pine many slender brother and sister saplings, around whose slender waists many silken threads are wound.

Near by, lifting its head above the soft car-

pet of the home pine needles, stands the father boulder, braving the fiercest storms, unmoved. Kind-hearted it is beneath its hard, rough exterior, so that many green moss and lichen friends nestle close to him for protection. Thus the little spider may confidently give into the boulder's keeping many of her first foundation threads.

Securely has the little spider laid the first threads of her friendship web in the home forest. Yet she must still seek other friends to entrust with her ever-widening life-web.

She finds a thistle whose downy blossom bids fair to be a friend, but on the touch of intimacy it leaves the stinging wound of unkindness. Poor little spider! You have learned for the first time that something in the world forest may not be your friend!

She falls to the earth, bruised and sad at heart, but ever as she falls she spins the thread of trust by which again she climbs to faith in the nature world. For although one may prove unworthy, are there not many still holding faithfully the tiny threads which form her friendship web?

The pine, the sapling, the boulder, maple, oak and even grasses and flowers hold their ends of silken threads entrusted to them. Around their green houses is woven the spiral thread of life which touches each radiating

friendship thread, and binds all into a perfect whole. In the center of friendship's web is her home and loving ties.

Each thread of friendship is distinct in itself. The thread from the pine tip is not dependent upon the thread from that of the nearest tall maple tree or even the tiny flower at its feet. Each goes to the center which the spider guards, but she has bound all these friend-threads together by her spiral of life. Thus, while a friendship formed with the maple may not vitally be entered into between maple and flower, yet because of the spiral thread that crosses those that radiate, the vibration of one friend-thread must be felt throughout all the friendship web. Life is the sensitive thread responding to the touch of every part of friendship's web.

A storm of difficulties sweeps down upon the forest, destroying the web; yet, though it is torn away, the spider, weak and disheartened, is alive and unhurt. Bravely she again seeks to lay the first threads. Still stand the forest friends, unshaken in the storm. "What shall hinder the formation of the web of friendship as before?" thinks the spider. Perchance the grasses have formed a friendship with another spider, and are too engrossed in the new web to hold the thread of its former friend!

Foolish grasses! One spider's slender threads

will not complete thy narrow life. Each web into whose making thou lendest thy life widens thine own powers of friendship. Each web holds the vibrations of other lives of the forest, with whom thou couldst never come in touch were it not through their messages carried by the slender vibrating threads of the web thou hast in thy sympathetic hold.

As a tiny grass, thou couldst never know the power of the mighty pine, towering into the blue of a sky which is far above thine eye. The pine pulses with life that differs in expression from that of the oak, the beech, the hemlock, or even the shy wood flowers, yet all is one Life. Each pulsation that enters thy heart enriches it with the life of the forest friend from whence it came — whether or not that friend was conscious of the power it gave forth through the delicate spider's web in its hold.

Thus the little friendly spiders spin their webs throughout the nature world, binding together unlike parts, that by the spiral of life, which joins friendship's threads, all may be brought into a loving union which comes through friendship's sympathetic touch.

BEYOND THE HORIZON THE SUN IS STILL SHINING

The sun is the light of the world. When it sets below the horizon it leaves in darkness the part of the world which has so lately seen it, *but* beyond *that* horizon the sun is still shining!

We watch the sun as it sinks from sight behind the distant mountain. The earth seems to have opened and closed upon the giver of light. Yet, as it goes, it has never touched the earth, nor been altered in its course beyond our sight. It sends back golden rays of promise which illumine the clouds above it. We see now only the clouds, but even they are brightened by the sun beyond the horizon, till, as it passes on beyond the sight of the clouds they grow dark and it becomes night indeed.

No, not wholly dark, for the stars shine forth one by one through the long night, and perhaps in the east the clouds show silver, heralding the approach of the full moon. It rises and follows after the sun, yet more slowly. It, too, sees the sun! It shines not of itself.

In every life there is light — a Soul that shines as the sun. When that Soul has run its course, it sinks beyond Life's Horizon. The earth seems to take from our sight that which made the light of our day, but, in reality, *beyond the horizon that Soul is still shining!* It has passed from us, but it continues on its way, unaltered. It illumines our clouds of sorrow by this promise of its onward course. It sees that which lies beyond our Horizon. Its light is not dimmed because *we cease to see it*, as our night of loneliness approaches.

As the clouds darken, let us look for the starlight of friendship that begins to shine in our sky. We will never see it if we fix our eyes on the dark earth.

In Life's East shines a Light which speaks of the glory into which the departed Soul has risen. We are not left desolate, for it shines for us still, although by the reflected light of memory; while our love tells us that beyond Earth's Horizon that Soul is still shining, in Heaven's Light.

The night of sorrow is not long. When it is over we shall see that Light in all its glory, in Heaven's East. There, in Heaven's endless Day, there shall be " no more night," for above the clouds of earth we shall see beyond Earth's Horizon where God's Light is ever shining.

"IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE"

To stray far from the busy human sounds; to sink in quiet solitude 'neath a low-spreading tree on a wooded slope; to feel Nature's heart pulsing with health and vigor as she holds her Earth's child on her bosom.

To look up through the waving leaves to the sky, and catch gems of blue with setting of golden sunshine.

To listen to the melody of the wind in the trees, sung to the low accompaniment of Nature's church-organ in the rich harmony of the distant ocean.

To catch the faint strains of the never-ending chorus of tiny creatures amid the grass.

To sit in silent rapture over a liquid solo from a songster in the leafy boughs, and join silently with grateful heart in Nature's hymns of praise.

To breathe deeply of Nature's incense from trees, shrubs, and flowers.

To see God's arms outstretched in the branching trees above.

To feel God's endless Love in the boundless blue of the heavens.

To see His infinite Wisdom and Fatherly

care in the protection of minute creatures of air and earth.

To lose the human self in the Divine presence.

This indeed is to be "in tune with the Infinite."

FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW

The white world, covered with newly fallen snow lies before us. In which direction shall we make our path? Onward in the direction we were going before we sought shelter from the storm? Or shall we turn backward?

Whichever way we turn we will leave behind us deep marks of foot-prints in the pure, untrodden snow. Shall we make a steady straight line toward our destination? Or shall it be tortuous and uncertain? Now broken, as we turn to look wearily behind at the distance covered? Or wavering from side to side as we are disappointed in the way we have taken? No words are written, except by the magic writing of the snow, but the story of our journey is told in deep characters, to be read by the next pilgrim who shall study its meaning.

The next pilgrim! Ah! Our journey is not taken alone. We do not tread the path merely for ourselves. If so, the responsibility of making our footsteps aright would end with us, and the problem be less great.

The next pilgrim, struggling along the unbroken way, comes upon the deep prints you have made; and, grateful to find a lessening of

the effort of making a new path, steps into that found ready and follows it! If it twists and turns or stops, he must keep his eyes fixed on the footprints, lest he miss one, or overstep the mark. He is not making his own choice, but following yours — however good or bad it may be — taking long or short steps as the need may be.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" You may not realize that you are, but some brother will certainly be more or less influenced by the path you set before him. If he be weaker than you, you must be his guide. Yet even if he be stronger, your choice may seem good — and may be good at the start — but how can he tell where it will lead him?

The footprints made by the first traveler, and followed by the next, and the next, are soon trodden down into a solid path, narrow at first, then widened out as the crowd increases. Thus the path becomes the acknowledged highway — leading where? As one and another pilgrim reaches his destination — good or ill — a sign post is raised that shows other pilgrims what would be their probable destination if they continued in the path on which they are traveling.

There are many paths leading in all directions. By carefully studying the signs, the pilgrim may turn aside from a path of wrong.

The way over which he must go to return to a path of good may be long, but when it is finally reached, the pilgrim is more willing to follow where it leads, and more zealous in studying other signs that he passes.

Often the pilgrim comes to a fork in the road on which no signs are found! Shall he take the path which seems most frequently trodden as his guide? How shall he know how many have found pitfalls along it? Even then he may always turn to that Guide who never fails to direct those who will sincerely ask Him for guidance; and although the drifts may seem deepest and the path more blind, that way is the one for him to take, for at its end lies his destination.

We suffer from cold, and stumble in the drifts; but there is beauty all about us if we will but "look up and not down." There may be need to help some weaker pilgrim who has fallen, and needs you to start into life his frozen purposes and numbed conscience.

It may be that but for our footsteps, made aright through persistent struggles, some pilgrim might have wandered long and aimlessly, straying farther from the sheltering Haven he seeks.

Are our footsteps made in the right path?

BENEATH THE ICE THE RIVER IS STILL FLOWING

How silent and cold and hard the River looks! It has retired within itself, and formed an impenetrable barrier over its inner life. No one may look within, through its cold, icy crust, to see the mighty on-flowing of its ceaseless current.

Although to the thoughtless, the River is merely "frozen," hard, polished, unfeeling like a table, to the one who thinks deeper than the mere appearance, the *River* is not frozen! It has but encased its life in an impassive exterior; below the surface it is living more intensely than before, because of the friction, and added burden it must lift with its heaving chest, rising and falling with the tide of the World.

The River beneath cannot see the sunshine. It cannot feel the caressing touch of the winds gliding over its icy surface. It is moved only by heavy shocks of wind and storm which vibrate through its barrier, but cannot disturb its heart far beneath the storms.

Is it happy thus shut away, though protected? Would it not rather be open to the

warmth of the sun? Does it not hunger to smile lovingly at friends it passes along its banks, although it would be also more easily tossed by passing winds?

Perhaps the River has become tired by viewing the uncomely sights of teeming city life, after having merrily laughed along woodland paths. It may be disappointed by unfulfilled promises of the days of its brookhood in the mountains, and have shut itself away, hiding from curious and unappreciative eyes the secrets and emotions of its life.

In so doing it must thus bear its burden alone; for its cold, hardened exterior forbids passing friends to enter into its daily life. It must thus bear the added burden of being "misunderstood" and "unappreciated!"

Mistaking, therefore, its friends' inability to penetrate to its heart, for lack of affection, it hardens its crust still more, and flows on, ever more rapidly below it, in seeming peace and indifference!

When at last by the persistent, warming influence of kindness, the Sun — the friend of all — pierces through this deepening barrier of cold reserve, there shows through the rift the steady flow of life. Now it is unburdened by the lifted weight of reserve, which slowly floats away.

To that warm friend is revealed the secrets

of many hard struggles against rocks and eddies in its course, beneath the calm of the sheltering ice. Ah! How little the world outside knows of what is taking place beneath the walls of ice!

Many lives, in this cold, unsympathetic world, are building barriers of reserve around their inner life. We see but the passive exterior.

"They are strong, and need no help," we superficially say, but they may be craving the light of love which *you* possess. Will you pass on, and so add another grain to the thickening barrier? Or will you, by unselfish persistence and loving sympathy slowly thaw out a place in that reserve, and find, shining brightly through it, a heart true and deep, ready to take the warmth of love you bring, and to give in return an unmeasured depth of life which you may never be able to fathom?

For below the Ice of the World, the Great River of Life is still flowing.

SOWING WHEAT

"Lest ye root up the wheat, also."

The Keeper of the Fields has given us our portion in which to sow wheat. As we scatter the grain there are, mingled with it, seeds of tares and weeds which also have power of growth, and spring up with the wheat.

Shall we say, "Nothing but wheat shall grow in my field," and attempt to pull up the tares? If we do, other tares will grow faster than we can clear the field, and our wheat will cease to grow from lack of care.

The tender shoots need nourishment. What gain is there to the farmer if he exterminate forever every noxious weed from his field, and yet, by neglecting his wheat, has destroyed all promise of reaping a harvest for his Keeper?

The Keeper does not demand a field kept free from weeds, but one "white unto the harvest,"— not to uproot the evil, but to nurture the good.

Good dies without care, and so will the evil — when good chokes it by the fullness of its growth! Give all your energy to sowing the wheat, and raising an abundant crop. Give

less thought to the tares. Then, when the harvest of good shall be garnered in, the barns shall be filled to bursting with the "finest of the wheat." Then the tares will be taken away by the Lord of the Harvest and the wheat be freed forever from the evil influence.

Let your "fields be white unto the harvest."

GOD'S BENEDICTION

All day long the service has lasted, with a beautiful sermon whose truths have been illustrated on every side. Here the wanderer has been restored to the right path. The seeker for signs has found wonders greater than any of which he ever dreamed; and the skeptic has been convinced of the greatness and truth of the existence of Him whose omnipotence formed the text.

Not only lessons have been taught, but the Nature service has been made joyous by hymns of praise from innumerable throats, a service in which everyone has joined, no matter how small or insignificant the part may have seemed. Thus over all rests the Spirit of Him who is above all, in Nature's pulpit.

Now the service draws to a close. The choir of songsters on high is hushed. All is in perfect stillness, waiting for the Benediction. With bowed heads the leafy congregation stand. The sun's head is bowed lower and lower till it sinks from sight behind the altar hill.

Over the people shines a radiance not seen even in the full height of the Sermon itself. The blue vault of the holy temple is aglow with

the majesty of the High Priest. Even the cloud-arches shine rosy in the flood of light.

For God is pronouncing His Benediction! The service is over.

From His Hands, uplifted in blessing, the glory streams, and the bowed heads of His people show dark against the glorified temple wall.

Over all falls a peace whose power can still the most tempestuous human will, and which sinks deep into the aching heart, hungry for a Good, of which it knows not.

Slowly the High Priest lowers His Hands, and, like a rosy veil, the glory sinks. The blue shadows of the temple's vault sink deeper and deeper, blending with the receding gold as though loath to have it depart. The tender, golden green thus formed is the token of the union of heaven's light with earth's shadows.

The silent prayer following is softly broken by the distant chant of myriads of tiny voices in "Amen." As the temple is then slowly lighted by one and another of its countless sparkling lights, the evening service is begun. Now are sounded the praises of lesser members of Nature's great congregation, whose voices are too faint to be heard during the day's service. All are singing hymns to the glory of Him who presides over all.

Then, as the close of the night's service her-

alds the coming of another Day's lesson truths, again God pronounces the Benediction, and in the midst of the blessing comes His Sun, the Light of Truth.

GOD'S GOOD-NIGHT

All day long His children have played in His wide, happy nursery. Now Nature calls them away from their pleasures to tuck them safely away, each in his favorite resting place for the night.

Gently each little voice is hushed to sleep, and silence reigns. Then God comes and stoops to kiss His sleeping ones, and say, "Good-night." As He finds them safely hidden away from night foes, He slowly leaves the sleeping nursery and takes away the ball of golden light.

He has other children in His great nursery who sleep during the day children's play hours, and wake during the night. So God calls them when He has taken away the day's light, and gives them tiny silver lights by which to see to play. Now and then, on special occasions, He gives them a larger silver ball of light, like unto the golden ball of the day.

When His night children are tired of their play He covers them up snugly in their hidden retreats, and saying, "Good morning," He calls

the day children. With happy faces they arise with the coming light, and with His morning kiss on their foreheads.

THE SUN NEVER SETS

We say in our poor narrow language that the " sun rises and sets," though we know full well that it is not the sun that changes, but the earth that gives this appearance in its turning. We say, " The sun is not shining today," when the clouds are so thick that we cannot see its light. Yet the sun itself is not affected by earth's changes. Clouds and Darkness are of earth's making. The sun is incapable of causing *darkness* or of giving *cold.* Its mission is one of *light* and *heat.*

Thus, in our poor, narrow lives we say that God, the Giver of all Sunshine, changes, that He " hides Himself from us " when we let our clouds gather between us and His Light. That He " visits us with iniquity " when, as a result of our turning away from Him our night of sin and sorrow falls around us. Not until we turn our faces again toward the Giver of Good can our Day or Righteousness dawn. Are you turning toward His Light?

THE UNDERTOW

The mighty wave lifts its head far up above the trough at its feet as it rolls in toward the cliff, bearing everything less mighty along in its path. Nothing seems able to stop its onward career!

At last it strikes full against the immovable cliff and dashes into a spray! Its power is broken and it falls back to the ocean. In its chagrin it rushes from the scene of its defeat to hide its head! The ocean's great heart, however, seeing the battle between shore and wave, sends recruits to stay the flight of its defeated son. The fresh wave, catching its fallen comrade up in its might, bears him back to renew the assault!

The battle seems hopeless, for each new wave is only tossed back to be met by reinforcements. The ocean, nevertheless, is untiring, and, little by little, its assaults are telling on the lofty cliff. It finds a weak crevice against which it pours its troops. The space widens, only to admit larger forces of the enemy. Until, after ceaseless assaults, the ocean has separated from the cliff a large portion. This it

hurls with increased destruction on its powerful enemy.

We are a part of that infinite Ocean whose waves are battling against the Cliff of Evil. Our efforts seem hopeless and unsuccessful in our assault. We fall, disheartened, and retreat from the field of conflict.

Behind us, however, is the power of the Infinite Ocean pressing us forward to renew the struggles. We are met by a Force, stronger than that of our weak wills, that lifts our tired Souls, gives us renewed strength, and bears us onward!

One wave alone could never wear away from the cliff that with which the beach is strewn. Yet one wave after another, with ceaseless endeavor, has removed bits which line the ocean's bed.

Thus our daily efforts are helping to remove little evils from within and from without, and are breaking down great barriers of evil. Slowly, that barrier God covers from sight under the Infinite Ocean of His Goodness.

"THE SHADOWS OF THE TREES"

"How filled with sweet remembering is the phrase,
The shadows of the trees."

ROBERT BURNS WILSON

The tall, strong pines rear their stately heads far up into the free air and golden sunshine. While the sun rejoices to see their efforts to come nearer to him, he also reminds them that they are still a part of the earth, and sends, stretching out behind them, the mysterious shadows of the trees on the "good green earth." Not in a somber, chilling gloom, lessening the height of their aspiration, but gently showing them how far they have already climbed.

Their shadows are like themselves, with delicate tracery of "branching columns," shadows that lie *behind* them while they *face* the sun. It is only when they turn their backs on the giver of light that their eyes are filled with their own shadows. Beautiful in appearance is the tracery; but if it is dwelt upon as merely "dark shadows," and not as cast by the light of the good sun, even the beauty of form disappears, and only the gloom remains.

The "shadows of the trees"! With the de-

clining sun how they stretch out their long slender fingers, creeping slowly along their loving mother earth, whose arms are held out to receive the clinging fingers.

Mother Earth loves all her children, but her tall sons of the pines she loves best of all. So steady, so tall, reaching up and out, and deep down into her true, warm heart. Tallest, but also having the fiercest shocks of Nature to meet and resist. Nearest the sun, but also casting the longest shadows on the ground below.

The grasses are content to lift their narrow lives but a little distance above earth's level stand, and their shadows are hardly noticeable, yet they exist. Their capacity for holding and reflecting the light of the sun is slight, and their dark side is correspondingly small.

The grasses bend before the sweeping winds. They have no power to resist. Their strength lies in yielding. Although their safety is thus gained for the moment, what power comes to be better fitted for the stronger blasts?

The pine prepares daily for the shocks of life as it grows higher and higher. Each year finds it stronger as well as taller, but the " grass is cut down and withereth."

Oh! Better to grow like the pine, tall and strong to meet life's battles, though they strain our heart's core, and though the shadows that lie at our feet are long and dark! If we have

grown in strength, the battle wages harmlessly around us, for we are rooted deep and cannot be shaken. Better to have the shadows of the trees with their breadth and length and intensity than not to lift our heads above the level ground and cast no shadow whatever!

The higher our aspirations — the harder the struggles to reach them. The greater the height of success — the longer must be the shadows at our feet. Not a desponding shadow is it, but one in which to rejoice. For without it we would not know or appreciate the sunshine into which we have climbed.

Think, therefore, of the *sweetness* in the phrase, " The *shadows* of the trees."

IN THE GREAT HEART OF A REDWOOD TREE *

(Santa Cruz, California)

Wonderfully tall, straight, and of gigantic proportions stands the Redwood, five thousand years old! What a steady, silent growth throughout the centuries when man knew not of its being! Each year saw it add a tiny ring to its ever widening heart, each year saw it add to its straight, upward growth. Onward and upward through wind and storm, growing slowly, silently, but with a heart and root that could stand the passing of centuries!

At length from the root of this "great-life-of-the-forest" sprang a younger growth that claimed a common root with the monarch, rejoiced with it in the sunshine, and shared with it the storms. A wonderful group was this, one noble life going forth from the central form into the many smaller ones.

Thus the centuries rolled by, and, at length, the great central tree of this redwood circle,

* There stands a great circle of trees, in the center of which tradition says there once stood a central tree of huge diameter. A space in the circle shows where the tree broke it in falling.

having completed its temporal life, fell from its lofty height, breaking down part of the circle of younger trees as it fell. The monarch had fallen, but the faithful, broken circle of redwoods lifted their heads, still thinking of their lord.

As the centuries rolled on, the fallen redwood moldered into the rich soil where it had once stood, but the circle of trees to which it gave life still stood to speak eloquently of that mighty tree that grew in their midst.

In the center of this semi-circle was the heart of this great monarch. Let the visitor stand in this central point, silently, reverently, with closed eyes and spirit opened to breathe in this life that was once in the form of a tree. That power which gave it life lives on, nor dies with the dying wood. Lives on, and the *spirit* of the tree still stands. Still stands, and thou art in the very heart of the redwood! Canst thou not feel thy spirit unite with that of the tree, its rings encircling thee, its roots stretching down, down into the rich earth, its branches reaching out across the wide space toward the circle of its newer life, and its head lifted high into the sunshine?

Standing in the great heart that never dies, though the bark may crumble, thou canst feel the centuries roll by, and know the power of eternity's endless growth. The outward parts

decay and fall, but the Great Heart of Life itself cannot cease to be. Out of eternity it came, and on into eternity it goes, still growing upward and outward in spiritual growth.

Such is the power of the Soul to grow, for its Source had no beginning and no ending. The little period of growth while in the outward form is but a part of eternity. When the body falls, the spirit lives on, and leaves in this world larger or smaller circles of life to which it gave more or less of its own, in separate forms, but a part of the Great Life pervading all. In this circle, that which has gone still has a share in their life, but it is now continuing its power of growth with unlimited possibilities.

The Great Heart of the universe once took an outward form, and from that Life is drawn the power for growth, large or small, for every Soul.

Hast thou felt the stirring power of Life within thee from that Great Heart?

SWEETNESS AND STRENGTH

In a jungle there stood trees of tropical growth. At their feet and climbing up their trunks were shrubs, plants and vines in tropical profusion.

One night the trees and plants had a great discussion.

"See how strong *we* are!" cried the mighty trees. "*We* never bend in the storm. We never die! We have been growing here for centuries, and you come and go. Some of you are choked in the tangle of branches and never even ripen your fruit!"

"Yes," answered the plants. "But see what sweet flowers we bear! See their glorious color and rare fragrance! Without us the jungle would be dark and gloomy enough. Our fruits, too, are good to eat, and the animals love us. They would fare ill if we were not in the jungle."

Just then the aged Sandalwood tree spoke.

"Oh, brothers and sisters of the jungle," he said, "why argue thus among yourselves? You are all drinking in the same dews and golden sunshine, and your roots sink deep into

the same rich soil of ours. Each chooses that which can best add to the growth within, be it plant or tree. Each has his own work to do. What matter whether it be accomplished in the short seasons of the plants' life, or in the longer life of the tree? The jungle has need of both.

"The sweetness of the flower alone, or the strength of the tree alone does not make the perfect jungle, for each contributes its own store. The flowering plants give of their sweetness that the tree may breathe in its fragrance. The tree imparts its strength that the weak vine may cling and be strong enough to lift its head into the sunshine to bear its fruit. Both accomplish their mission, for neither sweetness nor strength alone can make the perfected life. That which is strong must grow in sweetness, and that which is sweet must grow in strength.

"I have lived all these years," continued the Sandalwood, "and at first aspired only to the strength of the tree. At length as I looked down on the flowers at my feet, I thought that with all my strength there was yet something that I lacked. Did the flowers, so frail, yet so sweet, hold the true secret of an ideal life? No, that could not be, for their season was so short and their fruit soon perished.

"I then looked up at the birds flying with

such perfect ease and freedom. Surely they must know the true secret of living!

"So I asked a Bird of Paradise, one day, if he could tell me the secret of living.

"'The secret of living?' he sang. 'Why, *that* is to *live* and *grow* to the *highest* and best that each is capable of in the place which he has been given. The only way to accomplish this is just to *keep on growing* and gaining in some new direction. Never stop, whatever happens. Everything that comes has in it something to aid in our development. Nothing is really a *part of our lives* except that which *aids in our growing*. All else, no matter how much it may affect us at the time, is really *outside of us*, not a *part* of us.'

"Then the glorious bird soared high above me, and I wondered much about its saying. What was I making a *part* of me as I grew from year to year? Was I taking in the best that was offered to me in the place in which I was given to grow? Why could I not take in from soil and air that which made the flowers sweet as well as to absorb all that made me strong and tall?

"Thus, little by little I gathered in qualities of sweetness with the flowers and qualities of strength with the trees. At length into my very heart there came a fragrance that was unlike that of any flower and not possessed by

any tree. For it was given by the Great Spirit of Life that blessed my efforts to combine sweetness with strength."

There was a hush in the jungle when the Sandalwood had finished speaking. Then the Oak made reply,—

"The Sandalwood has spoken truly, for he has learned the true secret of living. He has taken into his life-fiber the best that surrounded him, and thus made everlasting the fragrance of the flower in the strength of a tree."

Are we like the Sandalwood? Have we learned how to ingrain into the very heart of our being the best that life offers,— not a passing glory of the physical life, but an eternal strength and fragrance of the Soul? Are we still growing, or are we content with the height merely of the plant life and its weakness? Our power of growth is endless! What are we making a part of our inner life? Be not content that good *surrounds* you, for unless you make it a part of *your* life it is wasted. Seek not to gain only strength or sweetness alone, for that soul is the noblest which grows steadily in *both sweetness and strength.*

THE HERO OF THE FOREST

In the midst of a great forest a tiny sapling was struggling for existence. It stretched its tiny roots down into the hard soil and met obstacles of every kind to be surmounted; but it bravely sought deeper until a spring refreshed its drooping spirits.

Above ground it met greater difficulties of wind and storm, of heavy snows weighting it down and injuring its tender buds. Still it looked up at the tall, straight trees around it and longed to be as strong and tall as they; it seemed impossible that such a tiny sapling could ever reach their height.

"Courage," whispered the South Wind. "They, too, were once as weak as thou art."

Thus it struggled, till, one night, nearly two thousand years ago, a bright star that shone above the glory of the rest, gleamed over the forest and seemed to rest on the little tree as though in benediction. The radiance stirred the tree with a feeling of new life and greater power for growth, for the star seemed to be drawing it upward.

The sapling grew and the light of the star

shone out in its life, so that all who entered the forest loved the tree with the silver bark.

All Nature seemed to join in testing the strength of the slender trunk. Winter added burden after burden of ice and snow, till the tree bent its head down to the ground. It longed for a glimpse of the star that shone that night, but it held fast to the silver ray, and patiently bore its load of care, uncomplaining that its comrades stood straight and free.

The Lord of the Forest saw its heroic endurance and that it stood firm under the trial, so He gently lifted part of the load. The life in the tree slowly, perseveringly lifted its head higher and higher into the sunshine, out of the shadow, and looked up to thank the Lord of the Forest for its deliverance.

Thus the tree met and overcame each obstacle, or endured the burden that it was not able to lift. Its frame thus bore the records of the strife; yet, twisted and bruised as it was, it stretched up and out, less beautiful in form than its straighter comrades, yet more beautiful in the eyes of the Lord of the Forest.

One day there entered the forest a man in white robes, who seemed to shine amid the dark trees. He seemed thoughtful and sad, yet walked as one who was searching for something.

As He lifted His eyes, sweet and tender as a woman's, He saw the tree with the silver

bark. His face lighted with a smile. Then gently stroking its bruised limbs He said,—"Blessed art thou! Well hast thou born thy cross in life. Thou shalt be honored above all the trees of the world, and in thy death thou shalt become the Tree of Life!"

On its bark He then traced the symbol of the cross.

That night as the tree was wondering about the saying, a dark robed figure entered the forest, and seeing a tree whose form marred the symmetry of the woods, he said:

"This tree is fitted to become the cross of one who is leading the multitude astray and is rightly condemned to die."

So saying, he remorselessly laid low the tree.

As the tree felt its life going, it thought of the words,—"In thy death thou shalt become the Tree of Life," and believed.

. . . . . .

Again the white-robed figure touched the silver tree, then very truly becoming the symbol it bore on its surface. Sadly, but with a smile, He lifted the cross and the crowd pressed onward.

Darkness over the land. A voice cried out. And all was still. Through the cross there passed a quiver — it had become the Tree of Life!

In heaven that day there appeared a beauti-

ful tree with a silver bark, free from blemish, tallest and straightest of all. On its surface it bore the golden trace of a cross over which now appeared a crown. Angels clustered around it and cried:

"Behold the Tree of Life!"

In their midst shone One in white who touched the glorified tree and said, "Behold the Hero of the Forest!"

THE AUTUMN OF LIFE

"'Tis Autumn!
Everything is dying!"

We see the leaves fall, the grass turn brown, the flowers and tender plants fade and wither away. Every sign of summer's active, fresh life is disappearing. No wonder the so-called "melancholy days" make us say that "everything is dying."

Let us see what happens. Certainly a change is taking place, but how is it wrought?

The tree stands strong and tall, with its wide-spread limbs bearing myriads of leaves during the summer's warmth and showers. Every leaf is filled with the life of the great tree, whose deep, spreading roots in the rich earth send nourishment coursing through every inch of its structure.

Each leaf is free to drink in the sunshine and moisture to add to the life of the tree. Every part of the great whole has its own mission to fulfill, and the perfect growth of the part makes the perfect growth of the whole.

Autumn comes. The tree has matured its fruit, and parted with it, for the new life of the future. The leaves have completed their task.

The tree no longer needs them. So, from each tiny house it withdraws the portion of life that had been doing its work through the summer. That life which made it a leaf has been withdrawn from it into the great life of the trunk and roots. The passage through which that life was wont to flow so freely has been tightly sealed — a scar to those who know not that it is but a closed door to the life within!

The leaf falls, but not without the tree's knowledge. That empty shell, the leaf, has nothing in common now with the living tree. The life of the leaf has become one with that of the tree, and the material form which encloses that life must needs fall away as soon as it becomes useless to the life it held.

Autumn merely takes away that which has *no further use.* Nature is not "dying" but "putting off the corruptible" to make ready for a new life. There is no *less* life than before; it is merely because we are not able to perceive the existence of the life, because its outward manifestation has ceased.

Death severs the individual life from the outward "house" in which it has been performing its work for the Spirit within. Its work has been accomplished. The Great Life slowly, gently withdraws its vital forces unto Itself; and, as the last particle of the life passes through the door of earth, the way is sealed.

The exit from the earthly house has become the entrance to the heavenly life.

That new embodiment of the little life with the Great Whole not even the leaves left on the tree may understand. They feel the life still flowing through them. They may fancy that there is a new element of intimacy in that current. Can they surely say, however, "The life that I feel is the life of the leaf which was so near me"?

The lives that thus pass from the earthly embodiment must be received by the Life from which they obtained their being. The more nearly the life in the individual existence has become one with the Life of the Source, by living from that Source, the richer will be the new life upon which it is entering.

Who shall say but that through the degree to which we are receptive to this Source of Life, we who are left may feel the nearness of the new life of the one who has left us? For we are drawn closer through our loved one's nearer communion with Him in whom we *all* "live and move and have our being."

THE HARVEST

Why think of the glorious culmination of nature's summer — the Harvest time — as the "melancholy days"? The trees are bare of *leaves,* 'tis true, the cold winter winds are coming, and the snow will cover up the bare earth. Yet this is but the end of Nature's toil, the fulfillment of the spring's floral promise. The flower faded, long ago, but the tiny promise of future life has been swelling and ripening into mature fruit. Nature has perfected that which she saw in maturity while yet in the tiny bud. The fruit falls, seeds are scattered in different directions, leaves are borne away by the wind and the tree is left desolate.

Desolate? No. For whence the leaf fell may be seen the tiny bud which is the life of the coming spring. The leaves, as well as the fruit, are "ripe" for they, too, have completed their work. The tree no longer needs them to aid the growth of fruit and bud, for these are ready for the future promise that each holds. The leaves, however, have still a use in the great plan of Nature. They cover the seeds scattered on the ground and give of their properties to enrich the soil for growing plants.

The flower of Youth is the promise of *fruit* of a "ripe old age." Why dread the coming of God's Harvest? Why fear to give unto His keeping the fruits of character that we have ripened, unless, indeed, we have neglected our flowers and so have no fruits for the harvest? Truly, then, with falling leaves falls the beauty of life itself. What promise shall the buds hold?

The body, like the leaves, falls when its work is ended. The Soul has ripened its earthly fruits, and its buds of Eternal blossoming life are formed to open in the warmth of Heaven's Spring.

We gather in the bounty of Nature's completed work, and call it our harvest. The farmer who labored with Nature has also ended his work and he has seed ready for spring planting. To him, surely, the harvest is "completed work." He cares not that the fields are brown and bare, for he holds the promise of another harvest of greater abundance. The dried corn husks tell of the ripe ears that once grew thereon.

The brown leaves fall to the ground, and to the earth are returned the mineral elements which they gained from the earth. They are not "dead" leaves, for they were never really "alive." They but held the life of the tree which worked through them, and which has been

withdrawn into the tree itself. The leaf is not the inner life of the tree, neither is the body the inner life of the Soul. The life of the tree is *within*, and we see only its manifestations in leaf, bud, flower and fruit. The life of the body is within, and we see but the manifestations of the Soul working through the body.

When the life of the tree passes from the leaf the way by which it passed is sealed. A scar tells the tale of the completed work of the leaf, but there above the scar is the bud, the future life and growth of the tree.

When the soul passes from the body the way through which it passed is sealed. A scar is left and we call it "death." The seal is set on the worn-out body to tell of its completed work, and the now useless part that once held the life returns to earth. Above the scar of death is the bud of eternal life which opens not on earth, but in heaven.

Are you looking for this promise of the Soul's heavenly life,— or at the scar and faded leaves? For Life's Harvest on earth is but God's "completed work."

THE HIDDEN LIFE

"God is Life, and He is 'All-and-in-All.' Nothing can have life except in Him. That Life, however, is always *hidden*. We never *see* the Source, but only the outward signs of that inward power of growth which we call 'life.' Life pervades everything and is ever seeking expression. Mother Earth throbs with the hidden power which seeks an outlet in the blades of grass, the flowers and trees."

DR. ALEXANDER MCKENZIE.

The "*Hidden Life*,"— yet we seek to see it! It is a power that is deep in the Source from which we draw our own life. Nature has roots that stretch deep below the surface where they fulfill their purpose in drawing nourishment for the plant or tree above the ground. No one sees these roots, unless the tree be uprooted in a storm and then its life passes away.

Our life has roots, but we wish to *show* that we have them. Thus we pull them up from their natural depths of earth and so injure the life we previously had above the surface. Roots were never meant to be spread out in the sunshine. Their mission is to stretch wide and deep in the rich darkness of the life-giving earth, with as intricate a tracery of delicate

branches below as of those drinking in the life of the air and sun above. A greater mission of life is theirs below, for they search far into the endless sources of life.

The tree sees the stars and aspires to reach them. If, in so doing, it neglects to send its roots deeper, its strength will soon fade and even the possibilities of its former life will be lost.

Fancy a tree saying,—"I can drink in rain through my leaves and absorb enough sunshine to nourish my growing buds. Therefore, what do I need of roots? They are so delicate and the earth is so hard. There are no barriers in the air, so I will just grow upward instead of putting life below where it *cannot* be *seen!*"

The tree may stand for a time in calm weather, but here comes a storm! Alas for the foolish young tree! It has no *hidden life* for a foundation, and at one cruel blast its beautiful structure,— which had no *real* life in its branches — falls! All its hope of life is gone, and passers-by see its mass of roots which should have done their work *below* the earth.

A tree, however, whose strength has been exerted in seeking all possible nourishment from the hidden sources of life may not always have as noble a structure above ground, for it may be twisted and bruised by the heavy storms raging over it. It, nevertheless, has a sure

foundation which cannot be shaken, for it has sought and found the *hidden* life. Have we found the Hidden Life below earth's storms?

JEWELED RADIANCE OF HEAVEN

When "God formed the dry land," He gave into its keeping bits of heaven's luster to glorify the clay in which the jeweled light was hidden.

Taking tiny rays of each light He gave them form and scattered them over the earth's hardening surface. It closed upon them, making their exterior like unto itself. They who would find the hidden glory must seek it.

Shining around the throne is the ruby light of Love — the light of the cross. The story of the redemption — its passion and suffering, but the fathomless depths of God's Love shines out in the blood-red light. None but those who are pure in heart can bear to look upon this symbol of Love. This light of Love God gave in rare bits to the dark earth for which the sacrifice was to be made. Treasure the Ruby of Love.

He who finds and lives in that jeweled radiance must bear his cross on earth, yet in it he will also find comfort and feel the uplifting power of the Light of Love which the shadow of the cross lessens.

Encircling the Life of Heaven, and permeating all, is the limitless blue depth of Truth, with

no cloud, save to those whose eyes are still dimmed by earth's doubts. Those who gaze far into its depths become filled with the knowledge they seek in the light of Truth. It is the never-failing light of God's Wisdom glowing throughout all His worlds, but in its undimmed glory only in Heaven.

Gems of this sapphire light God gave in its purity that those who seek Truth may look far into its clear depths, away from earth's clouds, and, in the light of Wisdom, strengthen their faith in the goodness of Him who is the Source of Truth. Seek this Sapphire of Truth.

No sun is needed to make the endless day of heaven, for the golden light of eternity never gives place to darkness. In the world of the Spirit there is nothing material to intercept this light of Righteousness so that there are no shadows of sin. Clear and spotless was the pure, golden gem that held this light, for it knew no shadow of heaven's making,— the topaz — symbol of Eternity.

To him who is worthy to bear such an emblem Earth's sorrows will be illumined by the golden hope of eternal life, where the darkness of sin and sorrow is never seen. Shine in the light of Righteousness and bear the topaz emblem.

Mingling together in heaven's sky the blue light of Truth and the golden light of eternity,

there was formed a union which gave birth to the emerald light of Life itself. In this emerald light all Nature shines. By this union life joins the qualities of both lights. By the golden light of Righteousness, life can know no end in eternity's unsullied glory. Through the blue depths of Truth, life holds a portion of God's boundless Wisdom.

In heaven alone the emerald light of Life shines clear in field and wood. On earth the red light of the Cross mingles with it, dulling its brilliancy, and its shadow hides in its hidden recesses. Life on earth must ever bear the shadow of the cross. Although God gave the shadowed light of Life in the Nature world of earth, He gave precious jeweled bits of the emerald light of Life into the dark earth's keeping. He who seeks not merely the pleasures of the earthly life may find this light, and by it may see amid the shadows of life the light of Truth and Righteousness uniting in the Life eternal. Grow in this emerald light of God's Life.

To these heavenly lights of Love, Truth, Righteousness and Life, God gave a crystalline form that they might dwell on the earth — a glimpse of the glory of their heavenly existence. We therefore bear the symbols in the ruby, sapphire, topaz and emerald.

Then God gave an earthly symbol of Crea-

tion which was a heavenly light, yet with earth's shadows.

Taking all the qualities of the emerald light of Life, He annulled (from the blue and yellow) the gold rays, adding to the blue light remaining a portion of the ruby light of Love. The shadow of the cross deepened the purple emblem thus formed, but it shone in the love it held, the love of the Creator. This light of Creation signified the earthly life where, by the union of truth and love a new life might shine forth. Although the union is of heavenly origin, earth's shadows must creep in for those who find the marriage light. Behold the amethyst!

When the shadows flee in the light of eternity, the golden light of Righteousness again mingles with the ruby light of Love and with the blue sapphire depths of Truth. Behold! The earthly marriage symbol is then changed into a heavenly union of spirits. For the light of Creation shines forth pure white, — in the diamond, the most resplendent of all! In its clear depths every light has yielded its glory to make the one perfected Light — that of the Creator who gave of His Life of Love, Truth, Righteousness unto all.

Thus to earth God gave this glorified white light of Creation that souls who mingle their lights of Love and of Truth may live in

the glory that comes by the new light of God-given powers. Hold sacred the purity of the Diamond of Creation.

They to whom is not granted on earth the light of Creation may seek separate glories of Love and Truth which, when held together in eternity's light will sparkle forth as the diamond — the gem of heaven.

Round about the throne of God there shines a rainbow "like unto an emerald" and verily, for it is the circle of Life which has no beginning or ending. There every light shines in its place in the one arch, an emblem that heaven and earth are one, and that life is eternal. For when life passes away from its shadows the Light of Life still exists, clear and transparent as when first given to earth.

For a signet, as Lord of heaven and earth, God set the heavenly lights in earth's shadow. In this signet the lights are ever changing, a token that the shadows of the earthly life hold but portions of the glory of eternity — the Opal of Promise. Only he whose eyes are not blinded by doubt and fears may find and live in this Light of Promise. Art thou worthy to bear the Opal of Promise?

Thus the earth was filled with heavenly colors. The ocean, tossing ceaselessly, could not hold such jeweled radiance. God, therefore, loving its breaking waves, shed His lights over

its surface where they shine forth, reflecting the glory that rests on the Sea of Life. Deep in the heart of the restless ocean God gathered the colors, embedded a symbol of Peace, that out of suffering should grow the Pearl of Salvation —" of great price." Art thou brave enough to bear the Pearl of Great Price?

He who bore his load in the light of heaven should thus find his burden transformed into a wonderful, soft, white light, less dazzling than the diamond gem of heaven, but far more precious in the eyes of Him through whose suffering the Pearl-of-Great-Price was given.

Great is this symbol, for it stands at the entrance to Heaven, that they who enter the " Gates of Pearl " may know that they are returning Home. Through the gates they pass on to give back to their loving Father the jeweled radiance, now in a spiritual form, which they have gathered during their stay on earth. According as they have found and lived in His Light on earth will each be able to behold the glories of heaven, and grow through the powers each possesses.

Are you gathering jeweled radiance of heaven?

FATE

GOD'S FORE-KNOWLEDGE OF EVENTS

We abuse the term fate in our misconceptions of its meaning.

"Men insult their destinies and call it fate." By their own disobedience of God's laws, calamity comes upon them, and they call it fate.

What is fate? Are we bound by it so that we have no freedom of will or action or choice?

God made man in His own image, with like possibilities of power. He did not create a *slave.* He created a *free man!* He did not create any two alike, or place any two in like conditions; each being He created free to develop the powers within him.

God knoweth all things. Past, present and future are alike to Him. He plants the acorn and even then He can see the full grown oak of the forest. He knows that from that acorn nothing but an oak can grow. The "destiny" of that acorn is the oak. Its "fate" depends on conditions while growing. But the fact that it must be an oak and not a pine doesn't limit in the least the power of growth which the life of the acorn possesses.

God knows before the acorn sprouts just what storms will rage through the forest, and just how the mighty oak, or young sapling will stand the strain. He knows what rocks the tender roots must meet, in their spreading underground. He did not *put the rocks there to test the strength of the young oak.* Knowing, however, that it would find them in its life, He gave them power to overturn the lesser obstacles, or surround the larger, and go on its way.

Fate, then, is God's fore-knowledge of events to happen. It is not a definite line of action planned out for each life that enters the world. Each has a mission which is his *destiny.* There is not an ordering of life that enslaves the freedom nor lessens God-given powers of choice and freedom of will to act. Out of all He will bring *good.*

We have a "DESTINY to *fulfill,* but a *fate* to MASTER."

THE SUN CHARIOT OF THE IMAGINATION

In the days of Greek lore, Phaeton, a man, was described as trying to drive Apollo's sun chariot. In the hands of the sun god, the horses were under perfect control, and the sun in its course blessed the earth with light, and steady heat. In the hands of the man, however, the horses, driving furiously, plunged so near the earth that everything was scorched by the heat!

Are not our imaginations like unto the horses of Apollo's sun chariot? In the hands of the God of Good they run their day's race in majesty, blessing all with the treasures they carry. Yet let the man pervert his powers for good and let evil usurp the reins, and destruction and death follow, as the steeds of the imagination dash madly from their height in the heavens toward the powers of darkness! Nothing can check their downward plunge, or shield from the scorching passion all that feels their heated breath. The driver also will perish in the descent, unless he gains control of the forces within him.

Let the man, however, realize that he is in-

capable of ruling his imagination alone, and deliver its guiding into the hands of the God of Good. Then the rightful course will again be resumed, and the chariot will glide smoothly on its way.

The steeds of the imagination are not bound by limitations of earth. They are far above its din and dust, not touching heaven, but at times catching glimpses of its glory, which they reflect back to earth below.

The chariot is not always seen by earth. When prosaic cares and everyday duties gather, they hide the light of the imagination and life is monotonous and gray. We are chained to the earth, and cannot rise in the chariot above cold, intellectual rounds of thought. We cannot bask in the warmth of pleasures past. We are self-centered, and live only in the gray present. We do not rise in the chariot to look backward over the past and look forward through the mist of fancy to the joys of the future.

We may fill our chariot full of the graces and joys we pass in our daily flight through space. If, in our eagerness, we pluck thorns and weeds with the flowers, we may cast them from us, ere they bring us pain or choke the flowers' beauty. Seeds of evil left in the chariot may take root. These, like saprophytes, may feed upon the life of the good shoots, till the chariot ceases to be a fit seat for the God of Good.

Evil draws it downward, and the man becomes a wreck, as he drives from Good towards Evil.

From time to time in its course, the chariot may catch seeds dropped from Heaven's wayside. If these are tended carefully, they will flourish, bearing more seeds, till the fragrance is wafted to earth and all receive the blessings of the gifts of Good.

How are you driving your sun chariot?

IN THE GARDEN OF GOD

We are like children in the garden of God. He has given us permission to gather flowers for Him. Some have thorns which bruise the hand! These He has asked us to leave unpicked; not in order to deprive us of the pleasure of their beauty or fragrance, but to keep us from being harmed by the thorns.

Shall we be satisfied to gather a beautiful bouquet of the thornless flowers for our Master's throne? Or shall we refuse to pick those that we may, because what *seem* fairest and largest are forbidden to us?

Perchance by disobediently plucking that thorn we maim our hands, so that they will be incapable of gathering even the tiniest flower for Him. Thus we would have nothing to show when he asks us what we have brought for Him from out His wide "Garden of Flowers."

Or shall we, when we have so many beautiful flowers to choose from, pluck only the weeds for our bouquet to give Him? There must needs be a few weeds, for they grow so close to the thickly clustered flowers that we gather them while grasping the flowers. The Master of the Garden does not ask us to leave the

weeds out of our offering. If we stopped to separate the weeds, the flowers might fade before we could gather them. Thus again our offering would be small.

Let us therefore gather the flowers that lie nearest at hand, even though they be small and apparently insignificant, for they may be the very ones that the Master loves best. The largest ones may seem more brilliant in coloring, but they may not be as fragrant, or as lasting.

Let us not continually pass by these tiny flowers, seeking for larger ones, else we may fail to find those for which we seek; and, reaching the throne, empty-handed, the Master will be disappointed in us and shall send us elsewhere to pick more humble flowers. When, however, we are able to appreciate these lesser glories, we may be allowed to gather those for which we sought.

It is only by gathering the lesser joys that we can learn to appreciate the greater which lie beyond our reach at the moment.

REFLECTIONS — GOD'S MIRROR

"He holds the waters in the hollow of His Hand."

God gave us a material world to enjoy — one filled with beauty of form and color; but in it man has built unsightly structures, which, though necessary to his use, mar the delicate beauty of Nature's form.

God has given us His Crystal Mirror, which He "holds in the hollow of His Hand" and catches on its clear surface and melts into softness and added beauty all that looks into its pure, tranquil depths. There, even jagged rocks lose their sharpness, while spires and tall edifices mingle in harmony with soft masses of trees. All defects are made beautiful by rippling irregularity of form, as sky and earth seem blended in one plane. A touch dispels it!

God lets us use His Mirror only when we keep it free from the worries and tempests of evil which ruffle its surface and deface the vision. Even then, though it is veiled to our eyes, "*His* sight is never dimmed" by earth's commotion. To *us* alone the Mirror is a blank.

It depends only on us whether we will look at the beauty in God's Mirror. We must be

willing to stand close by His side where we can look deep into the "Hollow of His Hand," for if we stand afar off behind barriers we wonder that the light does not shine through. Nor must we try to examine the particles of earth lying on its surface, for the vision vanishes.

To us, the world made more beautiful in God's Mirror, is inverted. To Him, everything is in its right position. He sees things as they are. We see them as we interpret them. What to us seems awry, because we cannot look at it with God's wisdom, is fulfilling its mission on earth in a heavenly way. We judge from "earth's level stand." He "from heaven's height." We "see but a part." He views the "whole design."

God uses the Mirror to reflect the light he has given man that Souls that sit in darkness may be gladdened by its radiance. After the day's hot toil comes the calm of the evening peace, and in life's sky shines the glow of deeds of kindness, battles fought and won. These illumine the Mirror and gladden the Father's heart as He looks.

Over the distant waters is reflected the spire of aspiration which stretches farther and farther away from the commonplace things on earth's shore, and melts away at the feet of God.

Then appear the distant lights of love —

streaming out over the Mirror. Each a tiny glow in itself, but in God's Hand reflected far over the dark waters. Beacons of hope are they in the harbor of heaven. Many Souls on life's ocean of strife, seeing, shall take heart again, and steer toward their promise of heaven near. While above the voyagers there gradually appear the Star friends, who smile down lovingly upon them in their efforts. The light of the friends' trust is a golden pathway over which the pilgrims glide, fearing lest they forfeit the trust, but strengthened to dare in life's conflicts.

Thus the day dies; yet all that has found peace and beauty by resting on God's Mirror sinks deep into the crystal depths, and He closes His Hand over it. There He keeps it safely until the dawning of a new day of peace, when, as He slowly opens the hollow of His hand, the Mirror shines forth afresh, ready to receive new beauties and spread afar the glory of Nature's God.

EVIL SEEDS AND GOOD GROUND

In the wide world there are many little plots of ground, some in cold regions, others in warm, some in moist climates, others in dry. Each plot of ground is fitted to fulfill its own mission according to the conditions under which it is placed.

Flying through the air are many kinds of seeds blown from the form of life which gave them maturity. Each kind is seeking a plot of ground best suited to its special needs, that it may develop into a life similar to that of the parent from whence it came. Some seeds seek a warm climate, and moist land. Others will grow in sterile land with little of the luxuries that most seeds demand. Thus seeds may fall to the ground, but if it is unfit for their growth, they come to naught.

So also in the moral plots of ground. Each of us is preparing the soil of character that is best fitted to receive the seeds which we desire to have grow in it. We prepare our plot for seeds of good, and many of those flying past will alight and find fertile soil. As the flowers grow, our eyes will be gladdened by the beauty we are able to share with passers-by.

With the seeds of virtue fly also seeds of evil — of wrong thought, word and deed. They darken the air in their course! Our plot seems about to be choked with the evil dust, while the flowers fade and droop from lack of sunshine that evil hides.

As we are about to faint from the evil, the wind of heaven, sweeping down with a mighty gust, drives the dust storm before it. Lo! the air is pure and clear once more.

Thank God for His mighty Wind!

Quietly the seeds of evil come. Some dropped thoughtlessly by a passing traveler, who picked them on his journey afar. The seed sinks into the soft earth under his foot! It is there deeply buried! No wind can blow it away! The sensitive, impressionable earth feels the sharp edge and sharper roots as the seed seeks to develop the germ within it. The earth trembles with the mighty effort to push out the evil seed. What will become of its flowers of good if this thorn springs up and chokes them! With an imploring look to heaven for help, the relief comes! Down comes the rain of heaven; and the evil seed is washed out, and carried away in the torrent of pure water!

Thank God for His Rain!

The plot of ground, saturated with moisture, is found by a seed of evil which demands the rain to quench its burning throat. Swiftly it

sends down its long, tap root into the soft, rich earth.

Again the little plot seems powerless to resist the growth of the unwelcome seed. This soil that has been so carefully enriched for its flowers of good. Was it for this kind of seed that its efforts were uselessly made?

The Sun, looking down, sees the troublesome plant, now quite high above ground. Knowing that the plot of ground was not willingly harboring such a plant, it sends its rays beating down fiercely upon the weed. Unable to bear the burning heat of righteousness, the shoot, root and all, withers away.

Thank God for His Sun!

In every plot of ground unwelcome seeds of some kind find space in which to grow — seeds which neither wind nor rain nor sun can destroy. These, too, must grow with the flowers of good till the harvest time. When the Lord of the Harvest comes to gather in the seed of good for further growth in his heavenly fields, He leaves the evil seeds to die.

As long as we keep our plot of ground fertile, seeds of good must prosper in it. Evil seeds thrive best in sterile, stony ground where good seeds cannot live. Although lesser seeds of evil may grow in the earth with the flowers of virtue, we may never fear as long as we have God's Spiritual Wind, Rain and Sun.

THE SOUL'S MAGNETISM *

Deep within the magnet lies a wonderful power that is not of its own making. It is not a quality of the ore which holds the power. Other metals which are just as perfect as far as the material construction is concerned have not this quality which the magnet possesses. Whence then comes this power which cannot be seen and can be felt only by certain kinds of material?

Nature holds the secret deep in her heart, and gives this mysterious power of attraction to such of the material world as seek it and are able to hold it.

Seek it and *hold* it. These are the conditions Nature requires of those who would know her secret. The magnet has sought and won its right to hold it, but having won the power, how can it be preserved?

Clinging to the ends of the horseshoe magnet is an ordinary piece of steel. If you pull it away a short distance the magnet draws it back to itself. Forth from the magnet goes the in-

* A magnet loses its power unless a small piece of steel is kept on the magnet to be attracted to it.

visible power of attraction within it which irresistibly draws the other to it.

Take the companion piece away. What will happen then to the magnet's power? It is still putting forth its power of attraction, on and on into empty space. There is nothing which it can find to hold; and, as its efforts are continually fruitless, it gradually loses that power within it which depends on *holding that which it seeks*. At last, when the companion returns, it finds the magnet's power exhausted. It can no more be held as before. The magnet has become powerless, as helpless a piece of metal as the other! It has lost its right to Nature's power by ceasing to hold another by it, and it can only be regained by going back to the source in Nature and then holding fast that which it attracts, be it large or small.

The Soul has a power to attract which also is not of its own making, nor is it a part of the body in which the Soul dwells. The external form in which the power abides may not differ in perfection from the form which lacks it. The Soul's magnetism comes from a Source greater than that of the Magnet's power, and is given yet more freely. God holds the secret, and to those who " seek and hold " it is granted, this wonderful drawing power of the Soul.

To each Soul coming from God is given a slight portion of His power which allies it to

the great Source. The Soul must seek for added power if it wishes to attract more. Then, gaining it by coming close to that Source, it feels the incoming tide coursing through it. What a wonderful feeling of power the Soul has thus gained! Yet how may it keep the power?

By holding another by it, just as the magnet does. Near by is a poor neglected being, apparently devoid of qualities to attract. Shall the Soul pass it by, seeking a more beautiful companion-being? While it waits, the Soul's power is still going forth, seeking that which it may hold, and the Soul will lose its power unless it is used!

Therefore, hold this poor creature. For in the exercise of the Soul's magnetism, that which clings to it becomes filled with the strength and glory which the Soul possesses; till the companion Soul no longer seems devoid of attraction, for it has become able to hold others through its union with the magnetic soul.

While the magnet gives it also increases its power, for it is strengthened by holding others. Its power is increased by means of each companion whom it attracts and holds. For each, when it departs, carries with it a part of the greater magnet's power which it may exercise with others whom it shall find. *Magnetism grows by contact.*

The magnet attracts. The power goes forth from it and all within its scope, which are capable of feeling it, are drawn to it.

The Soul's power also goes forth. Its influence is felt and whether consciously or not draws other Souls unto itself. When they come, the Soul must exercise its power of holding. For if those that come are allowed to fall away, the Soul's magnetism is weakened and the ability to exert influence in other lives is lost.

"Why do you cling to *me?*" asked the magnet of a small bit of steel.

"Because you drew me," it replied. "You were so strong and I so weak, that when I felt your power drawing me, I just came, I knew not why. You will not send me away? If I might stay with you I am sure I could grow stronger — more like you."

"Your clinging is precious to me," said the good magnet, holding it closely. "The power which was given to me from the Great Source of Power, I will share with thee according to thy capacity for receiving it."

And the bond of magnetic friendship between them grew.

With all to whom the magnet imparts its power there exists a union even though the material forms be separated. The power of attraction is not bound by material bonds, but

goes forth seeking that which it will. The two attracting forces may meet even though the distance existing between the material forms is too great to allow them to be drawn together.

Thus, when separated, the stretching out of the bit of steel for the magnet's power was felt even by the great magnet. When at last they came together, the greater power said:

"You have seemed specially near me lately —I wonder why?"

"It must have been because your wide-reaching power of attraction drew my groping need of you," the lesser replied.

God, the Great Source of the Soul's Magnetism, draws all unto Himself. Each Soul that responds to the call is filled with wondrous power by which it may draw countless others unto itself and point the way to the Source of its own power.

Thus, throughout the World, great Souls are constantly seeking and increasing their power of magnetism of character by drawing from the Great Source. As they gain the power they keep it by holding others. Thus they impart in friendship's magnetic touch the blessing of that which they have gained,—a power for righteousness.

SELF-ABASEMENT AND SELF-CONCEIT

Both self-abasement and self-conceit take distorted views of the relation of self to its environment.

Self-conceit views the accomplishments of self through the small end of the telescope. Self-abasement looks through the large end.

Self-conceit exaggerates the importance and ability of self. Self-abasement depreciates the real value of the gifts God has given.

Conceit holds self so near the eye that the Soul cannot see the great world's glory behind it.

Self-abasement puts self so far in the background that the Soul cannot see the true possibilities of power it possesses.

Conceit fails to achieve greatness by falsely believing that self has already gained greater things than it really has accomplished.

Self-abasement fails to achieve the height of the possibilities within, because it underestimates the powers self possesses.

One who is conceited is unfair to his friends, who misjudge his real abilities under the false rose mask he assumes before them.

One who abases himself continually, is unfair to his friends who, seeing the true value of his powers, are continually turned aside as being " too partial."

Either extreme is a form of selfishness in that it is too conscious of self.

Modesty is the half-way station between the extremes. Modesty looks self squarely in the face, sees its failings honestly, takes with a thankful heart the gifts God has given to use *for* Him, and ceases to decry them for fear he overestimate himself before others.

Kind friends who have not traveled the same road, and so do not know the pitfalls and stumbling-blocks along the way, may pass a judgment that we, who know ourselves, may think is too lenient. Then it should be accepted in the spirit in which they give it. We should not lessen our friends' enjoyment of the standard of excellence at which they value us by holding up that which we believe to be our real standard. Such friendly over-estimation need never cause conceit. It should rather stimulate the receiver to strive to raise the work to the level at which the friend places it. If we aim at the stars and fall short we need not debase the result. For " not failure but low aim is crime." Whatever we may accomplish of good is not ours, but the Lord's for all good cometh from Him. We need never be conceited

over what is not our own to praise. Neither need we abase that which was intrusted to us as a talent to use for Him. Accept the one, five or ten talents with a grateful heart, and pray to be enabled to use it without pride, and without debasing it by hiding it in a napkin! Till we say, "Lo, here is *thine own!*"

THE GIFTS OF THE TALENTS

"To one the Lord gave ten talents, to another five, to another two, to another one," says the parable.

The talents were *given*. They did not belong to the servants because they had earned them by labor, but were *given* them by their Lord to be made good use of for him while He was absent.

It was no credit to him who received the ten talents, that he had more than the others. It was not of his own exertion that he became the possessor. He had no cause for feeling exalted above his fellows, but merely cause for thankfulness.

And straightway he showed his thankfulness by adding as much to his Lord's money as he had received from Him. If the servant had added one less than he was really able to add he would not have shown enough gratitude. The Lord commended his faithful servant on his return.

In like manner did the others,— except the last,— show their appreciation of the talents given them.

He who had received but one talent was dis-

appointed that he had not been given more, and knowing that the master expected much, was not grateful for the small chance given him to work for his Lord, so hid the talent for safe keeping. He was not expected to do more than he was *able* to do, but he refused to do *as much* as he was capable of doing with what he had. So the Lord justly deprived him of that which he had proven himself unworthy to receive.

The giving of that one talent to him who had ten was not to commend him for gaining ten other talents. It was merely an additional trust given to him to improve in like manner for his Lord, and with the extra talent came the additional responsibility.

He who had received the one talent was unfaithful to his trust. What would the Lord have said to him who received the ten talents if he had been as faithless? Much was given to him; much was also expected of him — and he proved worthy.

Each of us has been given talents according as the Lord saw fit to endow us. If we have received little, we are not expected to gain ten talents with our one. If we have been given much we are expected to gain more than one talent with our two.

If the world sees that we are using the talents given us to gain others, shall we become self-approving? The talents we have are not our

own, but were given us as a trust. We are but serving our Master by adding to His gift. Should we take the world's praises to ourselves instead of giving them to the rightful One, we mingle dross with our gold, and hinder the work of making other pure talents. Our eyes become blinded by the world's false glitter and we fail in our trust. Our Lord, sifting the false from the true will then say, "I gave unto you ten talents. You have added unto them but five." And great will be the grief of the faithless steward.

Count your talents carefully. Look in every corner of the napkin — for one may be hiding there which you must use. Take your talents into the world, for it is there only that you can use them to the best advantage in making other talents. Be not proud in possessing them, for they are not yours, but a trust from thy Lord. When He shall call thee to render unto Him His own, and give an account of thy stewardship, He may then receive the talents which through tears and painful effort thou hast added. Happy shalt thou be to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THANK YOU, OLD YEAR

The old year is going. Will you let him go without a word of thanks for all that he has left with you? He can linger but a short time longer. You would treat no other friend as coldly. You cannot urge him to "come again." You can but say, "I thank you.

"Thank you for the new friends you have brought. Thank you for the love and faithfulness of the old friends; for the strength with which much work has been accomplished; and the inspiration and courage given to undertake a new work.

"Thank you for the happy hours so freely bestowed; for rest and recreation; for deeds of kindness and usefulness wrought; for thoughts of greater clearness to speak the Truth, God-given.

"Thank you for bitter struggles for mastery, by which strength and power of expression have come; for the patient instruction of those who have led us along our way; for words of encouragement when all seemed dark.

"And most we thank you for our home and its ties kept unbroken through another loving year.

"As you pass over the threshold, Old Year, and the step that takes you out brings a New Year in to us, speak a word to him that he may hold your memory dear, and increase unto us the blessings which you have bestowed upon us during your ministry.

"Once more, Old Year, we thank you."

WELCOME, NEW YEAR

The clock strikes one in its series of the midnight hour. We hear the last footstep of the Old Year, echoing in the long hall of time.

If the clock should withhold the rest of its message from us the hall would indeed be empty and dreary on earth. It is but in heaven — where the hall broadens out into limitless space — that there ceases to be time and place.

We listen for the approaching footsteps of the New Year. Surely he is coming — but it seems so long! Slowly comes the second stroke and the door keeper in the hall of time announces the coming of the New Year. Alas! It is in the same monotonous tone of voice with which he had given the parting word to the Old Year just gone — forever!

Three,— four,— five,— six! Lo! the coming guest is half way through the heavy swinging doors. Seven,— eight,— nine! He t a k e s three steps and stops to look about him. Ten, — eleven, he stands face to face with the watchers for his coming. Will he speak to them? — Twelve!

A cheer rises from those who are gathered together, and Nineteen —— is royally welcomed.

He stands before them with his arms piled high with — what? For a thin veil is spread over all, and only the form of promise can be discerned.

Silently he withdraws the veil. The people watch with breathless interest. "Is it good or ill that he holds for me?" thinks each watcher.

The veil drops, and there in his arms lie tiny packages. What *do* they contain?

Silently, still, Nineteen —— takes a handful of these tiny mysteries and scatters them through the air. Then another and another till his arms are empty, and the air is filled with flying dust. At a single word the tiny packages settle, each falling to the rightful receiver, and on opening, each person finds fifty-two tiny seeds.

Nineteen —— speaks to the people and says, "I have given you each fifty-two seeds, one for each week of the year that I am to be with you. These you are to plant in the circumstances where you abide, and care for the shoots as they appear, each in its appointed time.

"Each plant will put forth roots of minutes, leaves of hours and flowers of days — which will bear seeds of time — if rightly cared for. These seeds you may store for sowing in Eternity. I will move among you, watching the use or abuse you make of the priceless gifts of time which I have bestowed upon you."

As he ceases to speak each goes his way, and plants the seeds he has received, each hoping that they may bring forth harvests of joy, prosperity, health, and, best of all, *love*.

In what kind of soil have you planted your seeds? What care are you giving them? Are you carefully storing the seeds as they ripen? As one plant matures, are you prepared to tend the new seed which is rapidly growing? If so, then as we are called to receive our life seeds from the hand of God, instead of from His yearly messengers, we may have a goodly store of profitable seeds. These we shall give into the storehouse of eternity — where only the perfect seeds are allowed to stay, and be sowed with the heavenly seeds in eternity's fertile soil.

THE SENSITIVE VASE

Tall and slender and fair it stands. The slender stem widening above to receive the gifts of fragrance it was designed to hold, and below, to give support to its graceful form. Delicately wrought is it with a wondrous design, and with rainbow tints mingled throughout the perfect whole. "A work of art!" we exclaim. Surely the Maker excelled in His craft, and we look in wonder at its beauty.

Near it may stand vases of less grace of form, simple design and less delicate material. Yet, opening their wide cups to receive the offerings for which they were fitted, they, too, are fulfilling their purpose in being.

Carefully we take up the delicate vase, fearful lest we crush it in our hands, and set it down gently that it be not injured by the jar, or fall from its slender base. Those, however, of more solid form and material, knowing they do not need as great care, we move from place to place, perhaps more freely and thoughtlessly.

Perhaps one who knows not the delicate structure of the slender vase, carelessly sets it down. Poor little sensitive vase! It feels the shock in every grain of its structure and quivers from

rim to standard. Deal more gently, stranger, for your rough hand was never meant to touch material of such sensitive nature. Well may you feel alarmed lest the shock show injury on the outside. And, since your eyes cannot detect a flaw you say, "No harm done." Little you know what the shock may have been to the sensitive vase because of its very nature.

Knowing the great need for careful handling, the maker set such a high price on his creation that none but those whose love for, and appreciation of its beauty might be able to possess it. It could never exist in the ruder, commonplace modes of life. Thus it graces the homes of beauty, receiving floral gifts which it holds, and sends forth again in beauty and fragrance to bless those who come within its sphere.

Knowing, however, that similar utensils are needed in the humble modes of life, the Maker fashions vases suited to the uses to which they will be subjected — made them strong to resist the knocks and wear of everyday life. These, too, homely and solid though they be, are still fulfilling their purpose in being.

The ways of the world are hard; and, whether by accident or carelessness, the sensitive vase receives a shock from which it can not rally. In its very heart there shows a delicate line to tell of the severity of the shock, but it stands up bravely still.

Ah! Redouble your care lest the wounded vase fall and be shattered by *your* carelessness. Is it not enough that it has been so cruelly treated — though he through whom the deed was done be bitterly repentant! Nothing can restore it now! Yet, beware lest you be the cause of its final destruction.

God is the Maker of His human vases of character. To some He has given exquisite beauty of form and character. To others He has given simplicity of design, but of wonderful coloring. Many He has made to be of common use in the world's needs — strong and unpretentious. Each has a need to meet, and each He has sent to its proper place in the world.

Are you of the less ornate class and yet wish to be like the sensitive vase of great beauty?

You do not realize the cost of what you desire. Now you go on with your work, without fear of injury from common knocks of life. Less gifted are you in your qualities perhaps, yet loved by those whose needs you supply. Would you willingly forego this simple life and your own qualities of usefulness to enter upon the life of the delicate vase? You admire its beauty, but of its inward vibrations you know nothing. It is able to give more pleasure because of its special portion bestowed upon it; but because of its very structure that which

gives you pleasure gives the greatest sensitiveness to the vase itself. It is tall and slender. It must therefore not be overweighted lest it fall. It is of thin, transparent glass. It must be carefully used lest it be crushed. The beauty and careful usage go hand in hand.

Poor little sensitive vase! So easily vibrating to the slightest shock from without. You are fitted for heavenly usage. Your mission is one of the most gentle and most loving. Great gifts have been wrought into your being by the All-Wise Maker. He knew the value of the utensil He was giving the world, but knew also its frailty. And, sending it forth, He gave its keeping into loving, tender hands, that it might be kept safely until it was ready to be sent out for the use for which He made it.

Happy, sensitive vase! Thank God for the care which guards you. And, when the shocks of usage come, feel the protecting fingers of thy Maker still holding thee as when He first gave thee form. Although thy slender form shall feel more keenly both the gentle touch and the rude, yet because of that very sensitiveness which causes thee pain, there lies within thy frailty the possibilities of greater glory in fulfilling thy destiny.

FEAR — THE WEAPON OF EVIL

"Fear makes cowards of us all."

So it is in the animal world. Every creature, great and small, has some enemy that it fears, some other creature which it knows is stronger or which has a more deadly weapon than it possesses.

The serpent is feared in all the jungle, by reason of its deadly sting. The larger beast preys upon the weaker and each is constantly on guard against a foe.

Fear is the weapon by which the foe conquers. The bird is said to be "charmed" by the serpent, but it is really petrified by *fear*. The bird has wings with which to escape if it chooses, yet the sight of the enemy and its poisonous dart — which means death — causes such fear that the victim forgets that it has wings!

Evil is perverted good. Evil chooses fear for its weapon, and hopes so to terrify good by approaching darts of evil that good shall forget that it has wings of trust. As long as good "*fears no evil*" but *trusts*, it has power to conquer all evil. It can never be harmed. Just as soon as we fear the approach of an

evil we disarm ourselves and give the enemy just so much more power to work us harm with the very evil that we *fear*.

Good is *always* stronger than evil, and trust greater than fear. All the strength and advantage lies on the side of good — as long as it holds its weapons firmly and ignores the foe. As soon, however, as good loses its trust in its ability to overcome, fear disarms and evil conquers.

Let good ever say, "I *am* stronger. I *can* conquer the evil that besets me, and I shall 'fear no evil, for Thou art with me.'"

An animal will not attack a man who has absolutely no fear of it. That is the secret of the lion tamer's power. Evil cannot defeat a man who is strong in good, and therefore he has no *cause to fear evil.*

THE SOUL'S BATTLES

The soul has its battles when everything *seems* at peace without. Deep within us the conflict is raging. Shall the Soul win, or shall its temporal enemies conquer?

The Soul is assailed first by one form of evil — perverted good — then another, each striving to pin it to earth that it may not soar to escape them. It wearies with the struggles, and fain would leave the battle ground to fight the battle on the morrow " when it is stronger."

If, nevertheless, it flies a truce today *will* it be stronger tomorrow? The memory of the enemy's strength yesterday will sap its energies for today. You admit to yourself that the enemy is a strong one, and by so doing you give it increased power over you. That enemy is sure to recognize your fear of its strength and will press onward with greater force. Each victory weakens the soul's energies till it falls exhausted, at the mercy of fear!

The battle is going hard! It seems dark and the soul is being overpowered. Never give over even *one* battle to the enemy. Look up! Reinforcements are *always* in sight — if the Soul will but look for them. Heavenly help is

always stronger than all the powers of perverted good. Forget the existence of the foe, and by keeping the reinforcements in sight, the Soul may win its victory without striking a blow; for in the light of good the dark hosts of evil can never stand!

The battle is won for today, so the Soul may rest and become refreshed by the reinforcements of God's host. Peace may follow, but the enemy is still abroad, and the Soul must be gaining strength for renewed struggles. Each victory leaves it stronger to resist the next, and lengthens the times of peace — which are the periods of growth and prosperity of the Soul. Till, when the King shall call His warrior home, the record of battles fought by the Soul may count a greater number of victories than defeats. Then shall the warrior be given the "crown of life" which God giveth to those victorious in meeting temptation.

"And there shall be no more strife," for in heaven the hosts of good have overcome forever the hosts of evil; but on earth they must still be allowed to attack hosts of good, that the warriors of God may win many victories for their King.

" BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART "

" For they shall *see* God."

It is with the heart of our being that we see, more truly than with the eyes. The organ of the eyes catches only the light radiated from the surface of the world. It is the inner eye of the spirit that sees below the surface and catches the truth.

God is Truth and Love. The eye that would see God must be able to discern Truth and Love that never lies superficially on the surface of His world.

Truth may be discerned only by the inward eye which comes to the " pure in heart." He who uses the pure inward eye is " whole " in heart. For we interpret the world to be what we *are* ourselves. If we would see God we must seek Good and Truth in His world. No one but he who is " whole," pure in heart, can see Him who is Purity.

He who is " pure in heart shall see God " *on* earth — not merely wait till he gets to *heaven!* The blessing does not add see Him " in heaven." The " pure in heart shall see God " in *everything!* He who is evil in heart

will just as surely see *evil* in everything! He interprets the world as evil because he himself has perverted the good God gave him. He *cannot* see any good because his "eye is evil." He cannot see any more than he himself is! If he wishes to see more beauty he must have beauty within. He must have music in his heart if he wishes sounds to be harmony rather than discord, else the grandest symphony ever written will be as nothing to him.

If we wish to "see God" we must have more of Him in our hearts. If evil is there it hides God from the eye of Truth within, and God will remain invisible as long as we keep the dark screen before the light. It cannot shine through.

To the "pure in heart" God's goodness and Truth will always be visible to the Soul, for no evil is present to hide it.

How can we remove the barriers within us?

Not by trying to push the barriers away by our own strength. That could never be accomplished. It can only be done by pouring in more light of Love which is always stronger than the darkness of evil. The incoming strength of Love must thus drive the darkening barriers before it. Darkness can never exist in the overpowering presence of light.

Thus by the help of that Love which "thinketh no evil" the heart will become purified.

God's goodness will become visible to the inward eye, and the greatest blessing of all will come unto him who thus "sees God" because "he is pure in heart."

GOD'S IN HIS EARTH

"God's in His heaven, all's right with the world," sings the poet.

God is not only "in His *heaven*, but also in His *earth*." Therefore, "all's well," because it is heaven where He is!

"In Him we live and move and have our being." For God *is* Life. Nothing *can* live that does not partake of that Life.

Thus God lives in His Earth. He manifests Himself to us in every form of living plant or creature. He is not the *form* in which the life is embodied; but in order that the world might be filled with life of air, wood, field, earth and water, He created forms appropriate for the place in which His Life should dwell. Thus we, poor mortals, call the forms of bird, of insect, tree or flower, the Life itself.

Life can never be destroyed. Life is growth. The God-Life manifests Itself in different ways, according to the form in which it exists, and the degree of Life the form possesses.

In the tree the Life is rooted deep to conform to the limitations and needs of the tree-form. In the bird it is free to soar or abide on

the earth. In the fish it must confine itself to the habitation of the sea.

In man, however, the Life reaches its greatest possibilities of manifestation according as, apart from the limitations of the flesh-form, the man *allows* the power of Life to move him.

To man is given the power to realize his vital oneness with the Source of the Life that is in him. Part of that Life must needs meet the uses and necessities of the body in which it dwells. The individual life is not the body. The life is only tied by the limitations of the body. Thus the more man realizes that his body is but the *means* of manifesting the Life that is within, not the *condition* of Life itself, the nearer he comes to freeing the Life from its fetters and rising to the God-powers in that Life.

"In Him we live and move and have our being." "*In* Him," not *outside* of Him. Not a separate life, but an inclusive life. He knows our thoughts, because it is through Him that we have our power of thought. Just as a drop of water in the ocean feels the motion of the waves because it is part of that great body of water in ceaseless motion.

We have the power to absorb more of the God-like powers of the God-mind in which ours is enclosed — if we but will it. We, however, take the God-substance which we call life,

and bind around it much of that which is earthly. Thus we hardly know that the life we live is a tiny part of the God-mind — Life, Love, Truth.

Yet no matter how filled with earth the powers we possess may become, there still exists within us that possibility for becoming God-like — because of His Being that is in us, which He gives to each of His children.

Thus, since each of us is a part of the God-mind, we can become more a part of each other. The bodies, in which we are separated from each other's lives here, cannot separate us when we seek communion through the Great Life in God Himself.

And, as we interchange thoughts more and more often in the Heavenly Mind, the bodily bounds are less and less binding, and we may "think into our friend's mind" because we think our thoughts through God's channel. And we are *all* one.

KNOTS IN LIFE'S THREAD

God holds the beginning and end of life's thread, but the rest He has let us hold in custody for Him. Many times we are too hasty and our thread becomes snarled. Shall we try to straighten it out by pulling on the knot? The harder and more impatiently we pull, the harder and more impossible to undo will become the knot! The thread is too strong to break. By worrying over it the strands may become roughened and even broken, thus weakening the whole thread! Patient endeavor only may accomplish it.

Perhaps by someone else's careless touch our thread becomes knotted. It seems hard to bear. We try to untie the knot, but although it may loosen we cannot undo it all. It mars a long distance of clear, strong thread! Why be dismayed? That knot was not of your making — God saw how it was made — so if *He* understands, what matters what the cold world may say!

The thread is not in our own keeping! How thankful we should be! He who holds both ends will surely be able to untie every knot — however hard — when He relieves us of the

custody in this world where knots must come. Our hands slide over the knotted thread with shame and penitence. This one came through hasty words, this through disobedience, this through distrust. Our misdeeds overwhelm us and we ask forgiveness. Lovingly the Master's hand slides over life's thread and at His touch each one disappears. Sweetly His voice sounds, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go and sin no more."

In the heart of every knot lies a lesson. If we give up despairingly without trying to untie it, we will miss that which lies hidden. The knot will be left large and ragged and the knots will grow more frequent and less easy to untie. What shall the Master say when all these lessons fall unheeded back into His Hand that gave them? He does not *make the knot*, but when it comes He puts the lesson in its center for us to find.

That knot which you are even now struggling with may hold for you the greatest help of your life. It resists your most patient effort? Never mind! Do not give it up till you have grasped even the smallest part of that lesson. Hold that, and when you look back you may find that the little that you gained from that knot, and the next, and the next, has helped you to clear the thread of a knot greater than any you have yet had! Do not grieve

because your thread is filled with knots not of your own making. It may be that your thread is more beautiful in God's sight than one given back to Him with scarcely any rough places. Your thread shows patience, perseverance and all the fruits of the spirit which came through the lessons carefully searched for in the many knots of trial. And you will enter on the care of eternity's thread at the point where you loosed your hold of it in Time's knotty hand, with greater strength and power to beautify it.

Therefore, accept with joy the knots that come through trial. Search diligently for the Truth which lies hidden, for in God's good time He will remove all traces of knots that have come in life's thread.

"FATHER, WE THANK THEE"

"For the fruit upon the tree,
For the birds that sing of Thee,
For the earth in beauty dressed,
Father, mother and the rest;
For Thy precious, loving care,
For Thy bounty ev'rywhere,
Father, we thank Thee."

And also, Father, we thank Thee for separation from loved ones by which has come greater union. For difficulties given to be overcome, by which has come strength. For solitary living which has made the love of friends felt more deeply. For that friend, who, by Thy goodness, didst open a new door — the door of wider opportunity. For talents, few or many, by which to become Thy missionary to Thy little children through those who lead them. For the confidence — hard won — in my powers by which I may have courage to tread new paths toward that goal which is too far and great to be seen while still in the woods. For inward temptations which call to self-control. For victories over self, and even for defeats which strengthen or bruise. For that strong

calling for a work which I can but feel, little by little.

Give me strength to follow wherever Thou dost point the path, however thorny. For it has been the very thorns, that, in the past, have broken the earth, preparing the way for the flowers. The strength which comes in overcoming these made it possible for the flowers to bloom. Nay, but for the effort needed to press through the hard earth the plant would not have been strong enough to put forth even its first leaves. How then could it have developed far enough to mature a bud — that blessed promise of the flower to come — and in its maturity to bring forth the perfect fruit!

Sweet is the companionship of the parent tree to the growing sapling,— protecting the shelter of its wide branches from the burning rays of the sun and pelting storms and fierce winds. Sweet to look up at its strong boughs and through to the very top of its straight trunk!

Ah, yes, little sapling, it *is* very sweet, but how can *you* ever grow to be as strong and tall when thus sheltered? In His great wisdom and kindness the Keeper of the Forest has separated this close companionship. Art thou lonely, little sapling? He is sorry. But listen! Though she is distant, thou canst still hear the whispering of the wind in thy parent's

branches. It is the same wind that stirs thine own slender twigs. She is distant, but thou art growing, yes, even stronger and taller because of the separation. Thou canst now measure thine own strength in time of storm, each victory finding thy heart's core firmer for the next struggle. At length thou shalt find thyself no longer a slender, swaying sapling, but a tall forest tree, spreading thy branches wide in invitation to Nature's guests. Nor knowest thou what greater work thou mayest accomplish — in the hands of the Keeper of the Forest. Even perchance in sacrificing thine own life for that glorious end!

Life is sweet, sapling, but it must also be hard to endure. Strength, sapling, grow strong to fulfill thy purpose in living. Whatever be the struggle, life is worth all it costs! Aye, all it costs — even unto the calling of the cross. For in the cross comes the greatest blessing of all — Life eternal!

And for *all*, "Father, we thank Thee."

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